

Odd S. Lovoll, *The Promise of America: A History of the Norwegian-American People*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press in cooperation with the Norwegian-American Historical Association, and Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1984. 239 pages.

The history of Norwegian emigration to America and of Norwegian-Americans has attracted a number of outstanding scholars, and their work has resulted in several full-scale histories. The two pioneers were the American Theodore C. Blegen (*Norwegian Migration to America*, 2 vols., 1931, 1940) and the Norwegian Ingrid Semmingsen (*Veien mot vest*, 2 vols., 1941, 1950), and in 1975 Arlow W. Andersen published his *The Norwegian-Americans*. Their work depended on and has been expanded and revised by a large number of detailed studies in books and articles, many of them published by the Norwegian-American Historical Association and under the supervision of the three successive editors, Theodore C. Blegen, Kenneth O. Bjork, and Odd S. Lovoll. Now Professor Lovoll has contributed a new synthesizing history of this immigrant group, *The Promise of America: A History of the Norwegian-American People*. It should serve as a model for such work in the future.

After a survey of patterns in Norwegian emigration from the 1820s to the present, Lovoll traces the history of an American Ethnic community, a "Norwegian America," as he has called his penultimate chapter. Nowhere has the story been more ably told. Moreover, Lovoll deals with aspects of the story that were not included by Blegen and Semmingsen, who did not go much beyond the nineteenth century: the Far West and the urban experience. The story of the Norwegian-Americans, however, is, as we know, not primarily one of cultural separatism but of increasing assimilation into the larger American society, and Lovoll's last chapter, perhaps his most important contribution to Norwegian-American history, has the telling title, "Americans — With Ties to Norway." Here he demonstrates how one of the accompaniments of social and cultural assimilation has been an increasing interest in the immigrant past and in Norwegian roots.

Lovoll's *The Promise of America* addresses itself to disparate groups of readers: Norwegian-Americans will find a well-written account of their own ethnic heritage; in Norway there has been an increasing interest in the history of those who chose to emigrate, and Lovoll has also published a Norwegian edition for the general reader in this country; in drawing upon the most recent scholarship, both particularist and generalist, Lovoll has above all written an important contribution to the historiography of American immigrant and ethnic history. For all readers the unusually rich photographic material greatly enhances the value of the book.

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